

FEAR AND EPIDEMICS.

Verily a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and when that little knowledge must serve as leaven for an Eddyistic lump of intellectual dough, it is small wonder, indeed, that mental and spiritual indigestion ensues. The San Francisco Bulletin has published a series of editorials under the caption above. Certain facts strike the reader with persistent force in their perusal. From these facts, debatable conclusions may be drawn. But let us first have out the facts.

"For, perhaps, the first time in history, the public is officially warned by the medical staff of a municipal hospital that fear of a disease is a serious pathological agent, capable in itself of producing sickness,—even death."

Yes, so the public is warned and has been warned by the medical profession for these many years. And so did Cannon demonstrate and establish on a clear experimental and scientific basis by careful laboratory investigation of the influence of emotions on physiology. And now, forsooth, "for the first time in history," etc. The writer should not have committed such an anachronism, unless, indeed, he was more intent on Eddyistic theories than on scientific fact. Too bad that an excellent and true idea, namely, that fear is an important element in disease pathogenesis, should remain for Eddyism to discover when, as a matter of record, it has been taught and practiced by physicians right along. Here, as in many another outstanding example, Eddyism takes a truth already recognized in science, garbles it, retouches it, dresses it in an illogical and distorting coat, and serves it up to the public as a gem of original discovery. The ignorance of scientific thought and work manifested by the writer of the Bulletin's editorials is characteristic of Eddyism.

With singular inconsistency for an editor but remarkably true to type for an Eddyite, another of these editorials states that "it is a fact well understood and fully attested by the best physicians that many illnesses and deaths are the result of fear." He seeks support from the profession he derides and inadvertently contradicts flatly his former argument that physicians denied all power to mental causes of physical disease. Then he goes on to argue that the epidemic is largely the result of fear, but does not follow this logically to its conclusion, and ends lamely, "Lack of fear will not, of course, give you immunity from any disease, but in the case of epidemics it will help." This is literally true and the golden truth is stated that fear is an element of importance in epidemics. It should, however, be stated that epidemics can and do spread irrespective of fear and often attack the fearless and leave the fearful alone.

Again it is stated that during the Chinese New Year season, drug stores and doctors are practically put out of business, and "the effect, as statistics demonstrate, is a period extraordinarily free from disease." The author of this editorial is hereby asked to produce the statistics. Until they appear, we are established in the conviction that no such statistics exist. The writer is qualified

by considerable residence and study in central China to state that no such condition exists. Just as at our own Christmas holiday season, the less sick leave the hospitals and foregather in their own homes, and just as death and illness are not prominent, so at the Chinese New Year festival, the home seeks to draw back all its members and illness is discounted so far as possible.

Here again there is an element of truth well worthy of imitation. A healthy sane mental atmosphere is to be fostered and to such an atmosphere our Christmas holidays and the Chinese New Year festival are directly contributory. The lesson of mental hygiene thus inculcated ought to be remembered the year round and still, we would not have it Christmas always, nor would a year's continuation of these holidays be a beneficial thing. Doubtless the author quoted above would go on logically, if his courage permitted, to advocate permanent suppression of doctors and drug stores. This should, then, lead to tremendous improvement in public and private health, and be our most effective means of prolonging human life and reducing the death rate. When the general public, which really, after all, has a remarkably sane judgment, chooses such a health program, the medical profession will offer no resistance. In other words, the tangible results of scientific medical work are of such a nature that they appeal as good to any intelligence which is sane, logical, and well-balanced.

Once more, and finally, The Bulletin states: "All over the country the doctors are now having a well-earned rest. And yet their recent overtaxing labors were not without benefit to themselves, for they had no time to become ill of the 'flu.'" What miserable, sarcastic rot! What utter defiance of the long death lists of physicians all over the country who have given their lives for their profession! This all-wise and supercilious trifler with facts betokens a chaotic ignorance of the entire matter. Those tens of thousands dead of influenza pneumonia died of hysteria! Indeed! One need not put in speech the judgment of sane society on such piffle.

Now, permit a few observations likewise suggested by the series of editorials in the Bulletin. On another page, of one of these issues, appeared a "news item" emanating from an Eddyite spokesman, stating that epidemics, contagion and infection are affairs of the mind only, and that the native Asiatic who dies in the cholera epidemic, dies of fear, while the fearless European goes with impunity through the cholera camps. Did the sapient writer ever experience or watch the personal care of cholera patients under epidemic conditions? Does he know how far fearlessness will save him from infection in such conditions? Has he ever avoided yellow fever by advertising his fearlessness to the stegomyia? Has he ever treated pneumonic plague patients, wrapped in fearlessness as a mantle, instead of mask, hood and gown? The list is long and time is short. Does he, in fact, know the rudiments of what he is talking about? Ignorance speaks in a loud voice and fools rush in where wise men step carefully in the light

of such knowledge and skill as God-given faculties and abilities have brought them.

In the column adjoining this remarkable exhibition of non-Christian pseudo-science, is an advertisement extolling the virtues of S. S. S. in rheumatism. Why not apply a little absent treatment and present-day public-spirited business methods to the advertising columns? In one issue of the Bulletin containing one of the editorials quoted, were the notices of half a dozen advertising doctors, and some twenty-eight patent medicines. Presumably the mental health pabulum afforded is on a par with the virtues of Tanlac, S. S. S., nuxated iron, and the balance of the host of human life-savers spread to view in those columns.

There is virtue in the idea of mental health and hygiene, of spiritual poise and fearlessness, of mastery of body and mind. These represent the enduring ideal and hope of the medical profession. It is discouraging and nauseating to see these great truths warped and mishandled in half-baked ignorance by Eddyistic and other faddists.

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL MEDICINE.

Beginning next month with the issue for January, 1919, the JOURNAL will institute a Department of Industrial Medicine. The reasons for this department are as definite as the functions it will endeavor to subserve.

Physicians have learned many lessons from their military experience. They have learned discipline and organization. This lesson will be speedily taken to heart in the approaching development of group diagnosis and treatment. The future organization of the profession will be compact and closely related to governmental insurance problems, industrial needs and a better understanding of public health needs. Doctors must organize as they have never organized before, or their economic independence will cease.

Physicians have learned many lessons in preventive medicine. The enormous impetus to industrial development in the era ahead, together with the large recognition of the responsibility of the public and the employer for the worker and his health, will force the physician to exercise an intelligent interest in industrial medicine.

It is safe to say that the language of industrial medicine and compensation insurance is today a sealed tongue to the majority of the physicians of California, especially outside the chief cities, and even there, exists a serious ignorance of the meaning and importance of industrial medicine. Occupational hazards, sanitation of industries, and hygiene of workers, are alike strange. The principles of industrial accident compensation, the part the State now plays and is destined to play, the practical opportunity and duty of the individual doctor, are unrecognized. He needs information on the elements of these topics. He needs to be kept informed of significant tendencies in these lines. He needs to keep in touch with industrial welfare work, both city and rural, both in California and elsewhere. He needs information on group organization. He needs must understand the function and opportunity of the physician in

this enormous field, ranging from hygienic care and selection of workers, through occupational diseases and hazards, to the professional diagnosis and care of the victims of industry.

To meet these needs the Department of Industrial Medicine is planned. Contributions, advice, opinions, experience, are solicited.

RED CROSS HOSPITAL WORK IN FRANCE.

Both money and personal service are being lavishly spent by the American people in Red Cross hospital work in France. There are two kinds of these, namely, those that are a part of the United States army evacuating system, and those that are not. The first class numbers now about ten. These are designated as American Red Cross Military Hospital No. 1, 2, 3, etc. These are in charge of a United States Army commanding officer but are administered by the Red Cross. The superintendent is a Red Cross representative. The supplies, food and construction work are all furnished by the Red Cross, but the personnel is furnished by the army.

It is a part of the function of the American Red Cross to serve as the army's emergency depot. Anything the army wants from splints to hospitals, from diet delicacies to recreation huts, is supplied by them. So close, in fact, has been this co-operation between the Medical Corps of the Army and Navy and the American Red Cross that there has been much confusion in the public mind as to what was really army and what was Red Cross.

To the second class belongs the American Red Cross Hospitals, properly so called. These now number fourteen. They may be navy hospitals or hospitals for French and American soldiers connected with the French army evacuating system, or hospitals operated independently by the Red Cross for the wounded of the Allies. The army may take one any one of these at any time and convert it into an American Red Cross Military Hospital if for any reason such a change has become advisable through some change in the character of the sector in which the hospital is located.

The American Red Cross has children's hospitals and hospitals for the tubercular. Besides this, the Red Cross has some six hundred beds in its eight convalescent homes. Here every effort is made to give officers and men something of that atmosphere of comfort and cheer that would be theirs if they were able to be furloughed home for their convalescence. All reference to their hospital sojourn is avoided. The men are given music, tea on the terrace, outdoor recreation and in every possible way they are made to forget war until they are again fit to return to the fight.

Hospital hut service in France includes two distinct branches of service. Hot drinks are dispensed; cigarets, tobacco and chocolate are sold; music and entertainment is arranged, and a Red Cross library loans books and magazines. But in addition to this, the American women operating these huts are made hospital searchers whose task it is to find out in more detail something of the wounded and killed and send this information to the families at home. These huts are a Godsend